



PHOTO BY HELEN SCHMIDLING

Crows and fish detail from "Spirit" by Steve Mathews.

**AWARDS:** Exhibit continues through February 23

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are Native American images, ravens and fish.

More work by Stasko, Birnbaum, Mathews and Zeitner can be seen at Sisters

Gallery & Frame Shop.

The Sisters Library Annual Art Exhibit continues through February 23. Some of the items, both two- and three-dimensional artworks, are still available for purchase, and FOSL receives 10 percent of the sales price. Library hours are Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

# Graduation rate climbs; still below average

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon's high school graduation rate improved in 2017, largely driven by gains from Latino students.

Figures released by state education officials Thursday show 77 percent of students earned a diploma in four years, a two percentage point increase from the year before and almost 10 percentage points higher than the class of 2012.

Latino students boosted their graduate rate to 72.5 percent, an increase of 3 percentage points from a year earlier. In 2012, it was just 60 percent.

Oregon regularly has one of the nation's lowest graduation rates and the uptick still leaves it below the most recently available national average of 84 percent.

"We are encouraged by the work underway to make our schools welcoming and effective for all students, which has contributed to better performance for those who have been historically underserved," Oregon schools chief Colt Gill said in a statement. "However, there is much more to be done to make sure

all students have the tools and support necessary to reach graduation."

Voters in November 2016 passed a measure requiring the Oregon Legislature to fund dropout-prevention strategies, such as fighting absenteeism and expanding career-technical course offerings. The Education Department is now getting ready to implement its plan to reduce absenteeism.

Oregon education officials hope to get the graduation rate to 90 percent by 2024. Some schools are already there.

Cottage Grove High School saw 96 percent of its students receive diplomas in 2017. Attendance is a major focus for administrators.

Chris Wells, the school's dean of students, said he meets with every student who misses class, even if it's just one.

"It's really brief, but I pull them out of class on their turf and talk to them about why they missed class," Wells told *The Register-Guard* newspaper. "Even if it's just one period, there are consequences, and we expect students to make it up on a one-to-one basis. So if they miss one class, they spend one period in lunch detention or making that time up with a teacher."

Meanwhile, North Medford High School saw its graduation rate rise to 90 percent, an almost 7 percent jump from a year earlier.

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